(e) the steps proposed to cancel all such agreements by MPEDA involving distracting activities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) is only a member of the Working Group set up by the Ministry of Agriculture - the nodal Ministry for monitoring and implementation of resolutions of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). MPEDA participates in the meetings of the Group only as and when invited.

(c) to (e) Does not arise in view of (a) and (b) above.

Ban on import of rice of phyto-sanitary grounds by Russia

1681. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Russia has banned the import of rice from India on phyto-sanitary and sanitary grounds;

(b) whether Government has ascertained the objections by Russian importers;

(c) if so, whether such objections are in the conformity with the WTO regulations in this respect; and

(d) what steps are being taken to remove such non-tariff restrictions on the Indian farm exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, sir. It has been ascertained from the Russian authorities that the ban was on account of detection of Aflatoxin and inadmissible levels of pesticide residues.

(c) Russia has not yet acceded to the WTO and is therefore not obliged to comply with of WTO regulations.

(d) Following the steps taken by the Government to sign a protocol, the ban on export of rice has been lifted with effect from 20th July, 2007.

Probe into cartelisation of cement industry by MRTPC

1682. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) is probing cartelisation of cement industry and jacking up cement prices in the domestic market;

(b) whether the MRTPC is not empowered to impose penalties and enforce disciplinary action against the cartel member and whether MRTPC cannot go beyond issuing a 'cease and desist' order; and

(c) whether Government will consider operationalising the proposed Competition Commission of India with powers to impose stiff penalties and leniency provision to deal with industry cartels?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) and (b) Cases of Restrictive Trade Practices against certain cement companies are being considered by the MRTP Commission under the provisions of the MRTP Act. The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act, 1969 empowers the MRTP Commission to enquire into Monopolistic, Restrictive or Unfair trade practices if any, against any person and pass a 'cease and desist' order.

(c) Proposals for amendments to the Competition Act, 2002, under which the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has been established, have already been moved consequent to the ruling of the Supreme Court following the legal challenge to the Competition Act, 2002. Approval by Parliament of the proposed amendments to the Competition Act, 2002 is necessary for the operationalisation of the Competition Commission.

Boycott of import of iron ore by Chinese steel firms

1683. SHRI MAHMOOD A. MADANI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Chinese steel firms have decided to boycott the import of iron ore from India, if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether it is also a fact that China has decided to take steps to make export of coal to India costlier, if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether such step is likely to rise the price of Indian steel;

(d) whether Government has made an assessment of such steps on the steel exports from India; and

(e) what steps are being taken to discount any adverse impact?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) China has imposed export duty on several items of steel. commodities including coke and other metals etc. with a view to curb exports of raw material and feed stock from that country and to increase its value added product exports. The imposition of export duties was made in May 2007 and applies to exports effected on and after 1 st June, 2007. The export duty imposition is for all countries and not specific to India alone.

(c) to (e) The variation in input cost of coal/coke is likely to affect the production cost of steel. However. it is not likely to affect the market price, since the market forces determine the price of steel in the retail market.